Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people

Information booklet for administration workers, receptionists and support staff working in organisations that provide services for children young people and their families
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### KEY

- **Reading**
- **Activity**
- **Research**
- **Things to think about...**
Why do I need to know about this?

This workbook could not possibly do justice to a broad and often complex topic such as child development. The aim is simply to give you an awareness of child development and the opportunity to begin to think about how an understanding of how children and young people develop, impacts on the practice of professionals.

We are going to look at four important areas of work that will raise awareness develop of the work that occurs across the wide range of children’s services in North East Lincolnshire. If you would like to look into any of these areas further, short workshops are being offered as part of the induction programme that will help you to understand.

An introduction to development of the child/ young person

In general this is about the processes that underlie an individual’s growth and change in behaviour over time. It examines development and change across a broad range of functions including: motor skills, problem solving abilities, conceptual understanding, acquisition of language, moral understanding, and the formation of a person’s identity. These changes are most influential in the first 20 years of life and many psychologists term this phase as ‘child development’. This area tries to answer the difficult question of “what makes a person the way they are?”

The five main areas that you need to be aware of are:

- Self esteem
- Attachment
- Understanding children’s behaviour
- The contribution family, caring and social networks make to the development of children and young people.
- Transitions

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a very difficult factor to define. In general terms, it involves:

- Beliefs about ones self that can vary greatly in different people e.g. competent/incompetent, able/unable, good person/bad person
- Associated emotions e.g. hope/despair, pride/shame

High self-esteem means that children and young people appreciate themselves and their personal worth. They will have a positive attitude, value themselves, are convinced of their abilities and feel they have control over their lives.
When children are raised in an environment that nurtures a sense of self-worth, competence and autonomy, they will be more apt to accept the risks inherent in learning. On the other hand, when children do not view themselves as basically competent and able, their freedom to engage in learning and capacity to tolerate and cope with failure are greatly diminished.

An analysis of research and literature by the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem, (1990) suggested a number of significant findings with regard to the effects of self-esteem upon children and young people. These were:

- The family is a strong force in the development of self-esteem. The early years are particularly important in establishing an 'authentic and abiding self-esteem' in a person
- High parental self-esteem is crucial to the ability to nurture high self-esteem and personal effectiveness in children
- School climate plays an important role in the development of the self-esteem of children and young people
- People who hold themselves in high esteem are less likely to engage in destructive and self-destructive behaviour
**Attachment**

**Definition of attachment**
Attachment theory refers to the special nature of relationships that are very close. Attachment is the psychological tendency to seek closeness to another person, to feel secure when that person is present and to feel anxious when that person is absent.

John Bowlby, one of the most influential theorists about attachment, described attachment as an emotional bond that impacts on behaviour “from the cradle to the grave.”

Attachment theory has led to a new understanding of how babies and small children develop. Very young babies have no sense of separateness between themselves and their carers. During the first year of their lives, as part of their psychological growth, they begin to be aware of their separateness – where their own body ends and their carer’s body begins – a sense of self begins to emerge. In a secure relationship, the young child will begin to explore the environment and accept their separateness from others.

If a carer doesn’t understand this and tries to prevent this first stage of independence, or if a carer is inconsistent and the young child feels unsafe, the child may never develop a secure base – a secure sense of self – from which to experience the world. A practitioner will work with these children and young people – “their early attempts to stand alone have left them insecure and vulnerable” (Mann-Veder, 2003).
Attachment styles

Attachment theory provides a useful way of reflecting about how a child’s first attachments influence later social, emotional and behavioural development. Mann Veder argues that knowledge of each child or young person’s ‘early history is critical in understanding how they will position themselves in relation to others (2003)’.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) outline four types of attachment styles based on self image and image of others.

- **Secure**
  - Positive image of self and others
  - Children and young people trust that others will be available and supportive; they are autonomous, yet comfortable seeking and expecting support from others.

- **Preoccupied**
  - Negative self-image but positive of others
  - Children and young people are preoccupied with attachment needs and depend overly on others for personal validation, acceptance, and approval.

- **Fearful**
  - Negative self-image and negative image of others
  - Children and young people view others as uncaring and unavailable; they view themselves as unlovable.

- **Dismissing**
  - Positive self-image and negative image of others
  - Children and young people distance themselves from others, viewing themselves as self-reliant and invulnerable to rejection by others.
An introduction to understanding behaviour

For the purposes of this section, challenging behaviour should be taken to mean any behaviour that creates a barrier to the child or young person achieving the Every Child Matters 5 outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Achieve economic well-being
- Make a positive contribution

The level of challenge will depend on the frequency, intensity and duration of the behaviour as well as how appropriate it is within the context and for the developmental stage.

A child’s or young person’s social and emotional development has significant implications for current and later social functioning, for educational, and employment success. Social and emotional development has links to the way that children and young people behave - if social and emotional development is nurtured at a young age, children are more likely to settle well into school, work cooperatively, confidently and independently and to behave in a way that allows them to make progress. A child with poor social and emotional development may be at risk of poor relationships with peers, academic problems and behaviour issues.

Considering the words used to describe behaviour

When talking about behaviour, practitioners and parents, as well as children and young people may use a range of words. Common descriptions include words like ‘normal’ or ‘problem’. The words that are used can have an impact on the way that work is carried out, so it is important to consider what is really meant by each word.

- ‘Normal’ is not an absolute term. Suggestions of what is considered to be normal behaviour will vary with age, beliefs, context, experience and culture, as well as across time. However, the perception of normality is likely to have been decided by adults in a position of authority, often with little reference to the beliefs and values of children and young people.
• ‘Problem’ (or difficult) behaviour raises questions such as – What is the root cause of the problem? Who is there a problem for? Who has to change to overcome the problem? The answers to these questions will be significant in informing the way that work is undertaken. For example – if a child or young person is seen as the cause of the ‘problem’ and that they must change to end the ‘problem’ – then work may be focused only on the negative which can make change difficult. However, if the problem is seen as a mismatch between what a young person needs and what is being provided, then the child or young person and practitioner can work together to find a solution.

The term ‘challenging’ behaviour is used here. However, even this term raises questions such as – Who is being challenged? What is the challenge?

📖 The contribution family, caring and social networks make to the development of children and young people.

The importance of play

Child development experts agree that play is very important in the learning and emotional development of all children. Parent-child play provides important opportunities for parent-child bonding. Through play, children create their own themes, test ideas, solve problems, learn to see other’s points of view, use language, develop muscle coordination, explore their environment, and make discoveries. Play has a number of important functions;

• Play is how children experience fun and joy
• Through appropriate play children develop their personalities and a positive sense of self, realise their potential and experience success
• Play unlocks children’s creativity and imagination, and develops reading, thinking and problem solving skills as well as motor skills
• Through play, children process and manage emotions, and understand and interpret the world around them
• Play helps children learn relationship and social skills, and develop values and ethics
• Play provides the foundation for learning including language, reading, thinking and reasoning skills.

The most authentic play experiences are child-initiated, freely chosen, and child powered. Such play is pleasurable and fun, active and mind absorbing. Play does need to be monitored for negative signs as well as negative play. Children should have the chance to play with others as well as by themselves.

Children and young people belong to a number of systems (as do we all)
Here are three of the most important ones:
**Family system**

The family is the closest, most intense and influential system in the child or young person’s development - including language, health, beliefs and security (Paqueete and Ryan, 2001)

For example, communication patterns established in the family may also influence the communication patterns for the child or young person. What might be the experience of the Looked After Child who may frequently need to move in and out of differing family systems with established patterns of relating to each other?

**School/education setting system:**

Schools and other education settings provide an environment for children and young people to establish relationships with peers and adults which can help them develop cognitively and emotionally. (Paqueete and Ryan, 2001).

As children and young people spend a significant amount of time in educational settings understanding the dynamics of this system is critical to the work of all practitioners.

**Community system**

Within communities children and young people can extend their relationships with adult and peers. It is also within communities that families can receive support and resources. Community offers the values, resources and the environment for these relationships to function (Paqueete and Ryan, 2001). Lewis and Morris (1998) in Paqueete and Ryan (2001: 2) identified five basic needs for positive development in children and young people:

1. A personal relationship with a caring adult
2. A safe place to live
3. A healthy start toward their future
4. A marketable skill to use after graduation from high school
5. An opportunity to contribute to their community

As the community system is integral to meeting these five needs, we need to understand the community in which children and young people live. For families who have experienced mobility, often moving from other countries, how might a child or young person’s development be impacted by moving to a new community?
Transitions

What are transitions?

The Oxford dictionary definition states that a transition is:

"A passing or change from one place, state or condition to another."

Transition refers to a change, journey or movement, from one stage, state or position, to another. It is not necessarily sequential and transitions may pass unnoticed or, at the other extreme, cause chaos in life. Transitions happen to babies, children, young people and adults alike throughout life. It is the process of managing transition and change that has profound effects on the individual.

For the majority of children and young people, the key transitions from babyhood to childhood to adulthood will take place in a relatively secure home and educational environment but change may still be traumatic and challenging. Managing transitions successfully remains one of the vital developmental tasks for young people and some of the greatest challenges and risks to learning come in the form of transitions.

Key transitions:

- Learning to walk, and to talk
- Entering nursery or school
- Moving from primary to secondary school
- Developing a successful sense of self within a peer group
- Managing a shift in relationship with parents and/or carers
- Coping with the more formal demands of learning from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and beyond
- Choosing subject options
- Making effective learning, career and life path choices
- Becoming financially independent
- Understanding the demands of the world of work.

I confirm I have read and understood the information in this standard

Sign:

Date: